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WOJCIECH S. KILAN

ORCID: 0000-0003-1507-1787

University of Wrocław

email: wojciech.kilan@uwr.edu.pl

Imago Dei in St. Thomas Aquinas: A Philosophical and Anthropological Analysis of Man Created in the Image of God

Keywords: image, imago Dei, human, Thomas Aquinas

Słowa kluczowe: obraz, imago Dei, człowiek, Tomasz z Akwinu

Abstract

Image as a philosophical concept has a long and complex history that begins as early as antiquity. Christian scholars included it in their philosophical studies in the form of *imago Dei*. In this paper, I analyzed the works of St. Thomas Aquinas to determine the anthropological consequences that follow from the idea of human creation in the image of God. I first establish that humans as beings created in the image of God participate through their intellect in God's nature. I then present three stages of human participation in God. Subsequently, I defend the classical theory of Aquinas against contemporary reinterpretation of his thought. I argue that Aquinas rightly claims that only the intellectual part of the human soul is, strictly speaking, created in God's Image, while the human body (and other irrational creatures) resembles God in the likeness of a trace.

Introduction

The concept of image is an important category in contemporary philosophy and anthropology. Many writers, such as Henri Bergson, Carl G. Jung, and Joseph Campbell, used this concept in their philosophical inquiries. Nonetheless, it must be noted that this concept had been present in European philosophy since its ancient beginnings—*eikon*, the Greek equivalent of the Latin *imago*, was used by Plato in *Sophist* (1921) and in *Timaeus* (1888), and it was also used by Plotinus in *Enneads* (1980). This concept was also present in the Christian philosophy and theology of the ancient and medieval eras. Christian writers inspired by the Book of Genesis included it in their philosophical and theological studies in the form of the *imago Dei*. In *Adversus haereses* St. Irenaeus of Smyrna claims that one must distinguish an image that signifies ontological participation in God (*methexis*) from likeness (*mimesis*) that concerns a moral change in a human being (1857). Tertullian claimed that only likeness to God can be destroyed by sins, whereas the image of God embedded in humans is imperishable (1894). An important contribution to the study of this concept in the early centuries of Western philosophy was made by St. Augustine of Hippo, who connected it with a comprehensive analysis of the Holy Trinity (1887).

This paper focuses on the theory of *imago Dei* proposed by a scholar of the late medieval period, St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most important thinkers in the history of Christian philosophy. Aquinas was greatly influenced by St. Augustine's *On the Trinity*, yet he combined it with classical Aristotelian philosophy. My aim in this paper is to reconstruct Aquinas's position on this matter in order to present the moral and anthropological consequences that follow from it. Moreover, in the paper, I shall defend the classical Thomistic understanding of the *imago Dei* against some contemporary interpretations and revisions. Most notably, objections formulated by Dr Montague Brown in the article *Imago Dei in Thomas Aquinas* (2014).

In the study, I will approach the question of *imago Dei* both historically and systematically. On the one hand, it will include an analysis of Aquinas's position and a study of contemporary literature dedicated to this topic (Aguas, 2009; Boyd, 2007; Bray, 1991; Bujak, 2010; Clines, 1968; Dziewulski, 2010; Eitenmiller, 2017; Fabro & Bonasea, 1974; Jiang, 2018; Kupczak, 2015; McFarland, 2001; Van Nieuwenhove, 2001; O'Neill, 2018; Peterson, 2016; Schoot, 2020; Spencer, 2018; Waldron, 2012; Vainio, 2019). On the other

hand, it will include an analysis of contemporary reinterpretations and critiques of Aquinas. In this part of the study, I will defend the classical Thomistic approach against the objection according to which not only the human intellect is created in the image of God but the whole human being—a unity composed of soul, body, and spirit.

The study will consist of four parts. The first will include a reconstruction of Aquinas's position on Man's similarity to God. In the second part, I will describe the most important anthropological and moral consequences that follow from the Christian and Thomistic understanding of this matter. The third part will include a presentation and refutation of the objections of Dr Montague Brown. Brown states that: (i) every intellectual act of a human being is carried out by the whole person, not only by their intellect, (ii) Aquinas wrongly claims that Man participates in God as in an alien nature. Additionally, Brown attempts to show that Aquinas contradicts himself when he states that only the rational part of a human soul participates in the Image of God. The fourth part is the conclusion of the whole study.

Aquinas on the creation of Man in the image of God

Any research into the concept of the Image of God must start from its source—the Old Testament, namely the Book of Genesis. In the first chapter of the Book, it is written:

Then God said, "Let us make man **in our image**, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them (New American Bible, Gen 1, 26–27).

These two verses play a crucial role in the Christian (and Jewish) studies on the nature of human beings and their position in the world. The concept of *imago Dei*, embedded in those verses, constitutes one of the most important clues in determining the unique character of humans among all of the creations. St. Thomas Aquinas recognizes its relevance and presents his understanding of this matter in the framework of Aristotelian philosophy, rethought and modified by him in many aspects.

Aquinas most extensively discusses this issue in the first part of *Summa Theologiae* in question 93. entitled: *The End or Term of the Production of Man, As to the Image and Likeness of God* (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93). The title itself specifies that the study of the concept of *imago Dei* is considered in the horizon of a human being as a creation of God and that it is constituted by some kind of likeness between God and Man.

St. Thomas Aquinas points out, after St. Augustine, that an image contains a certain degree of likeness to its object. Therefore, the likeness of one thing to another may constitute an image (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, co.). However, not every likeness between two objects is a sufficient reason to determine that one is the image of the other. Aquinas gives the example that it is impossible to state that one egg is an image of another egg because one is not an imitation of another. Even though there is a certain likeness between them, it is not the same as that between an image and its object (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, co.). Similarly, generic relations and accidental features of objects cannot constitute an image (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co.). For example, no one will say that an apple is an image of an apple tree, even though one is a product of another; or that a blue flower is an image of a blue cup just because they have the same color. Aquinas states that the only constituting reason of an image is the likeness in *species* (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co.). For example, a painting can contain an image of a certain thing, because it imitates the specific feature of this thing (for example, shape, when it comes to the material objects).

If so, how does this apply to the main question of this study—in which sense are people created in God's image? Aquinas claims that different types of beings are similar to God in different aspects and only some of them were created in the image of God. Inanimate objects are like God, because they exist, and living creatures are similar to God because they live. However, those two types of beings were not created in the image of God because the degree to which they are similar to God is not sufficient to constitute an image. Those beings are not like God regarding the species of those beings and God. Only the *intellectual* being, i.e., Man, is created in the image of God because they are like God when it comes to their *species*. Human beings are not like God only with regard to their existence or life, but also in their wisdom. And because “what shares in wisdom both lives and exists,” human beings are “unsurpassed among created beings” (Augustine, 1975,

q. 51).¹ As such they are capable of attaining the highest goods (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co. and ad 2). It is of course evident that they do not have the same nature as God and because of that, they are not *images of God*. Rather, they were created *in the image of God* and participate in God as in an alien imitate, “as the image of the king is in a silver coin” (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 2). Only Christ shares His nature with God and can be called an image of God:

And even though our gospel is veiled, it is veiled for those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (New American Bible, 2 Cor. 4: 4).

The Father and the Son have the same, identical nature, which is why Christ is a perfect image of God. However, human beings are imperfect images of God, i.e., someone created in His image, for they are like God when it comes to the qualities of their intellectual nature (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co.). Being created in the image of God means that humans participate, to a certain extent, in God’s attributes. Such participation constitutes similarity between them (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, ad 1 and a. 3, ad 3). The ways in which one object participates in another are demonstrated by Aquinas in the following paragraph:

For instance, man is said to participate in animal, since it does not have the account of animal in its full generality. Socrates participates in man for the same reason. The subject likewise participates in its accident, and so does matter in form, since the substantial or accidental form, which is common in virtue of its account, is determined to this or that subject. The effect is similarly said to participate in its cause, especially when it isn’t equal to the power of its cause—for example, when we say that air ‘participates’ in sunlight because it doesn’t receive it with the brightness there is in the sun (Aquinas, 1992, 2, n. 24).

One can distinguish the following types of participation: (i) *logical participation*, when a species participates in its genus; (ii) *real participation*, when, for example, matter participates in its form or fire participates in heat; (iii) *causal participation*, when, for example, effect participates in its cause

¹ See also (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 9, co.).

(Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 693). Man, as a being created in the image of God, does not participate in God according to the first type presented above, for it is evident that humankind (as a whole) is not a species of God. Also, it cannot be said that humans participate in God as in the case of real participation, because Man is not an *accidens* of God. Only the third type of participation can connect human beings with God. As Melissa Eitenmiller points out, Aquinas understands this participation causally, for God is a self-subsistent being (Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 693; Aquinas, I, q. 4, a. 2, co.), and all creations participate in Him in this way, for He is the source of their existence.

Moreover, it must be noted that one can distinguish two additional types of participation: (i) univocal-predicamental (ii) analogous-transcendental (Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 694). The first type of participation concerns such objects as, for example, “humanity,” in which all the humans participate on the account of their identical form. Yet, the participated thing is not a self-existent being but exists only if its bearers exist. The second type of participation is fundamentally different. It is a relation in which:

the participants have in themselves only a “down-graded likeness” of the participated thing which subsists in itself, outside of these, either as a property of a superior subsistent, or certainly, as a pure and subsistent formality in full possession of itself (Fabro & Bonasea, 1974; after Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 694).

As Aquinas says, *to participate* is to receive partially what is present universally in something else (Aquinas, 1992, 2, n. 24). Analogous-transcendental participation applies to the participants which have in themselves a down-graded attribute of the participated thing. The participated thing is a self-existent being, transcendental from the participants. Then, it can be said that all creations participate imperfectly in God, and all of their attributes, granted to them as creations, are deficient variants of God’s attributes. The extent to which they participate depends on the potencies of every being so that different beings participate in God to the extent proper to their natural potencies (Aquinas, 1895, II-II, q. 2, a. 3). It is then clear that only human beings are created in the image of God because they imitate God in the species of His nature.

Aquinas states that all material beings participate in God, but not in the same way as humans. They resemble God “by way of a trace” (Aquinas,

1895, I, q. 93, a. 6). Aquinas explains the difference between likeness as an image and likeness as a trace in the following way:

We may easily understand the reason of this if we consider the way in which a trace, and the way in which an image, represents anything. An image represents something by likeness in species, as we have said; while a trace represents something by way of an effect, which represents the cause in such a way as not to attain to the likeness of species. For imprints which are left by the movements of animals are called traces: so also ashes are a trace of fire, and desolation of the land a trace of a hostile army (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6).

A trace is similar to God, for it represents Him as its cause, while an image indicates that God and the participant are similar when it comes to their species. All material things, as well as all irrational creations, are similar to God by the likeness of a trace and only the human intellect is similar to God by the likeness of an image.

Such recognition raises the question of whether human bodies were created in the image of God. Aquinas states clearly that it is impossible to claim that the human body resembles God in His species and that it is created *in the image of God*. However, he also recognizes the peculiar status of the human body, because as the body of a rational being, it is, in a certain sense, inclined upwards, i.e., towards heaven, and “represents the image of God in the soul by way of trace” (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6, ad 3). That is why the human body is something more than the material body of an irrational being. Yet, on the basis of its nature, it remains the same as all other material things and irrational beings.

What’s more, the fact that, strictly speaking, only the human intellect is created in the image of God is even more evident when one notices that human participation in God enables them also to partake in the internal life of the Holy Trinity (to a certain extent).² Aquinas claims that the image of God is embedded in the intellectual part of the human soul, both as to the Divine Nature and as to the Trinity of Divine Persons (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 5, co.). Aquinas states that participation in the image of the Trinity follows the:

² This part of Aquinas’s theory is deeply rooted in the works of St. Augustine (St. Augustine, 1887, VII, 2).

procession of the Word from the Speaker, and of Love from both of these [...] so we may say that in rational creatures wherein we find a procession of the word in the intellect, and a procession of the love in the will, there exists an image of the uncreated Trinity (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6, co.).

A human's mind partakes in the image of the Trinity by the corresponding procession of the word when he or she understands and a procession of love when he or she wants (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 7, co.). The image of the Trinity manifests itself through acts of cognition and love and exists in human powers and habits (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 7, co., ad 1 and ad 2).³ It must be pointed out that the procession of the Trinity has an *internal* character and only the human intellect can imitate it (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 27, a. 1–3). All other types of human vision—corporeal and spiritual (imaginary)—are always connected with external objects (exterior body or species preserved in memory; Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6–7).

Moreover, the human soul, rational in its essence, is not only the form of the body (*forma corporis*) but also a separable intelligence (even if it is separable only in language and thought). It is the capacity of human beings that fundamentally differentiates them from all other creations.⁴ In the hierarchy of beings, intelligence places Man in-between brute animals and angels. As Seamus J. O'Neill rightly points out, Aquinas considers the human creation in the image of God in the context of the perfection and fullness of the world. God created the most complete and plentiful world in which there are no gaps between different types of beings. That is why Man is the sole creature (of this world) whose soul is not only their form but also a separable intelligence. That is why they are between animals, irrational beings whose souls are only the forms of their bodies, and angels, who are pure intelligences (O'Neill, 2018, pp. 23–24).

The Image of God has three stages of realizing itself in human beings. As Aquinas states:

³ The Trinity is firstly found in the acts of the soul, and secondly in the habits because acts of love are more perfect than the virtual potency to carry out such actions.

⁴ Intellect is the only unrestricted power when it comes to the possible objects of its acts. It differentiates it from the senses (both human and animal) that can perceive only the objects proper to their nature (e.g., sound for the ear, colour and shape for the eye).

Now the intellectual nature imitates God chiefly in this, that God understands and loves Himself. Wherefore we see that the image of God is in man in three ways. First, inasmuch as man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Second, inasmuch as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Third, inasmuch as man knows and loves God perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of glory. Wherefore on the words, “The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us,” (Ps. 4:7) the gloss distinguishes a threefold image of creation, of re-creation, and of likeness. The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third only in the blessed (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 4, co.).

Firstly, one can distinguish a natural stage in getting to know the image of God (*imago creationis*). Such a natural image realizes itself by “a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God.” It is common for everyone because it is constituted solely by the intellectual part of the human soul. Such an aptitude consists of an openness to know and love God, as well as the natural potency to do it.

The second stage of participating in *imago Dei* has a supernatural character and is founded by the grace of God that came to the world with Jesus Christ (*imago recreationis*). On the account of the fundamental role of Christ, this stage is also called *imago Christi*,⁵ for every believer is tasked and destined to follow the path paved by Christ. Aquinas states that it realizes itself when a person *actually and habitually knows and loves God*.⁶ This is different from the first stage because only the faithful are capable of realizing it properly. The main way in which Man can participate in the grace of Christ is by partaking in the divine sonship, analogously to the sonship of Christ. Without excessively delving into theological questions connected with this issue, it must be said that salvation is granted to those who partake in the sacraments of the Church—the Mystic Body of Christ—and most importantly in the baptism through which Man participates in the

⁵ *Gratia Christi*, the grace of Christ is a necessary fundament of the salvation of Man after the original sin of Adam and Eve. Before that human beings needed only the grace of God (*gratia Dei*).

⁶ The habitual acts of cognition and love are realizations of habits that Man can develop throughout his life (Aquinas, 1895, I-II, q. 49, a. 4).

Passion and Death of Christ and in the Eucharist, which is participation in Christ's Sacrifice.

The third and last stage of participating in the image of God occurs "as man knows and loves God perfectly" (*imago similitudinis*; Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 4, co.). Such participation is not available for anyone in this world and awaits only those who partake in God's Glory after death. As Aquinas states:

[The] ultimate and most complete participation of His Goodness consists in the vision of His very essence, in virtue of which we live in society with Him as His friends, since beatitude consists in that sweetness (Aquinas, 1933, III, d. 19, a. 5).⁷

This is a beatific vision, granted to those who participated in the grace of Christ during their lives and whose holiness was recognized after their passing.

Anthropological Consequences of the Imago Dei

The theory of Man's participation in God has great theological and philosophical relevance in itself. But it also provides an important insight into Man's nature, origin, and purpose in life. In this part, the most important anthropological consequences of human creation in the Image of God will be discussed.

The first important issue follows from the three stages in which human beings realize the image of God. The first stage is within reach of everyone because it is constituted by the intellectual part of the human soul (and all humans are intellectual beings). At the most basic level of human nature, there is the aptitude to know and love God. Such an aptitude is complemented by two higher stages of participation in God, but already at this first stage, a human is presented as *capax Dei*, someone capable of comprehending and loving God. This is true even if a certain person has never been introduced to the Christian faith. Of course, it is an aptitude to know and love God, not any deity. This is clear because as someone created in the image of a Perfect Being, we cannot desire anything that lacks such perfection.

⁷ See also (Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 698).

Additionally, as every human partakes in God's Being (*Esse*) they also participate in other transcendentals, such as God's Goodness, Beauty, and Truth (Aquinas, 1970, I, q. 21, a. 5). Of course, all creations partake in these transcendentals, but human beings are capable of doing so in a fundamentally different way. Humans can recognize the Goodness, Truth, and Beauty of the Creation, and also have the chance to realize this through their acts carried out in accordance with natural law. They can also develop dispositions—both moral and intellectual—that enable them to do this constantly and with ease. But as beings created in the image of God, humans cannot settle for goods and truths available by the means of natural reason. They strive for the eternal truths that enable them to achieve the beatific vision after their deaths. This might be a trivial thing to say, but as beings created in the image of God, humans cannot please themselves in worldly matters but must look toward eternal community with God.

The dialogue between Divine Persons, described in the first part of the study, is analogously transferred into the domain of the individual. As such an individual is capable of communicating with God, other people, and their community.

Secondly, it is important to point out that a human, an intellectual being created in God's image, is understood as someone *sui iuris*, i.e., someone that can act in their name. This fact is connected with a deeper feature of every human being that they are *capax iuris*, a person capable of being a subject of rights (Aquinas, 1895, I-II, q. 93, a. 5). In this aspect, human beings distinguish themselves from animals, for the latter are never subjects of rights in a direct way. They are rather objects of Man's rights, for example, the rights of their owners. However, one might also say that wild animals "have" rights in the sense that they, as the objects of human actions, must be treated in accordance with the universal order in which Man must govern the world. Tasked with governance over all other creations, Man cannot abuse his or her power (Aquinas, 1895, II-II, q. 64, a. 1).

Finally, as someone responsible for their actions, an individual human is not fully determined by the circumstances in which he finds himself. They have the freedom to choose good or evil, and decide what actions they are going to exercise. This freedom of a human being is constituted by an inviolable dignity common to all human beings, beings created in the image of God.

Defence of the Classical Thomistic Position

The next part of the paper focuses on the contemporary approach to the question of Man's creation in the image of God. Many authors inspired by Christian personalism claim that the creation of Man in the image of God concerns not only the intellect of humans but the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit (International Theological Commission, 2004). Moreover, some Thomistic scholars also give such opinions and claim that the classical Thomistic position on this matter should be fundamentally revised (Brown, 2014). In this section, I will only focus on the objections presented by Thomistic scholars, for the task of comparing Aquinas's position with many different types of Christian personalism is entirely unfeasible within this study.

Montague Brown claims that Aquinas, who stated faith and reason cannot contradict each other, proposes a theory of *imago Dei*, in which such contradiction exists. He makes four arguments in favor of this statement. Firstly, we shall reconstruct those objections, and, secondly, present the replies. The arguments made by Montague Brown show that the intellect itself is insufficient to constitute an image of God in humans and prove that the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit—is created in the image of God.

I. Every intellectual act of a human being is carried out by the whole person, not some part of him. Then the whole person is created in the image of God (Brown, 2014, p. 5)⁸.

II. Aquinas contradicts himself, when, on the one hand, he states that natural reason can give us knowledge about the essence of God (but not about the internal life of the Trinity); on the other, however, he claims that on the basis of natural reason, we can only know that God exists, not what is the essence of God⁹. Brown states that Revelation is the only way in which a human can get to know the essence of God and of the Trinity. The intellect

⁸ A similar argument was made by Mark K. Spencer, who approached the issue of the image of God from the perspective of "phenomenological Thomism" (Spencer, 2018, pp. 14–18; also O'Neill, 2018).

⁹ Moreover, the threefold relation of Divine Persons transferred to the internal life of the human intellect can lead to inaccurate reverse interpretations of the Divine Persons (Brown, 2014, pp. 5–6).

can only tell us that God exists, and as such is insufficient to constitute an image of God in humans.

III. Aquinas wrongly claims that a human participates in God as in an alien nature; in opposition to Christ who has the same nature as God (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 2). Even after the Fall, the nature of human beings is unchanged; and that is why it is said that all things were created in Him (Brown, 2014, p. 6).

IV. The most basic stage of partaking in the image of God—*imago creationis*—which realizes itself as a natural aptitude to know and love God is contradicted by Aquinas himself when he considers the blameworthiness of pagans for their rejection of God (Aquinas, 1895, II-II, q. 10, a. 1). He states that they can be blamed for their rejection only if they know that the rejected thing should not be discarded. But it is possible only if they have a natural presence of Christ in them (*instinctus dei*), which exceeds the natural aptitude to know and love God (Brown, 2014, p. 7). If so, then in human nature as a whole there exists an instinct for God, and “not just in volitional and intellectual potentialities of our natures” (Brown, 2014, p. 8).

Ad I. The analysis of the image of God in Man must first consider the constituting reason of this image, not the whole creation it is embedded in. Only the intellect of a human being imperfectly imitates the Divine Nature of God and constitutes Man as the highest creation in the hierarchy of beings (aside from angels). To equalize the reasonable part of a human being with his or her bodily parts is to abandon the hierarchy of beings presented by Aquinas.

This objection also raises the question of whether it is justified to extrapolate the consequences of a certain quality of any being onto the whole being and all its parts. It seems incorrect to claim that if one part of a bigger whole has a certain attribute, then all parts of the same whole also have such attributes. We can say that a human being was created in the image of God because a human is a person with a rational soul (still the intellect is a constituting reason for Man’s participation in God). But it is incorrect to claim that all other parts of a human being were created in the image of God, just because they are also parts of the same whole. It can be only said they are the parts of a bigger whole that were created in the image of God.

Ad II. Brown rightly points out that natural reason opens Man to the image of God as the First Cause and that Man’s intellect is not capable of “discovering” the Trinity on his or her own. Yet, Aquinas claims that it is within the reach of people’s natural reason to know that God is a self-subsistent

being, a Being (*ens*) whose Existence (*esse*) is its Essence (*essentia*), so that Man can know the nature of God naturally (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 2 i 3). Moreover, Brown does not show why the whole human being would be capable of discovering the nature of the Trinity (if it is impossible for the intellect) and why humans' actual knowledge about the Trinity is so crucial for human creation in the image of God. What instead follows from Brown's argument is that human beings are incapable of knowing God in any other way than through Revelation. But such a statement is entirely false (or at least clearly inconsistent with the philosophy and theology of Aquinas).

Ad III. Brown seems to mistake the nature of God in the Trinity with the nature of Man. When Aquinas claims that a human participates in God as in an alien nature, he means that the nature of humans and the nature of God are different. Christ is the Son of God, who is both perfectly divine and perfectly human, someone with two distinct natures that at the same time remains indivisible. Christ is an image of God because the Father and the Son are of the same nature (*homousios*). Yet, the Nature of the Incarnated God is not the same as the nature of human beings. Christ embraces human nature to bring salvation to humanity, but Man is not deified to the nature of God.

Ad IV. Aquinas states in *Summa Theologiae* (II-II, q. 10, a. 1) that in every person there is an "inner instinct" towards God. This instinct is indeed directed to God in the Trinity. But the non-believer is not consciously striving for God in Trinity, because they cannot know about the Trinity on the basis of their natural reason. Aquinas only distinguishes two meanings of unbelief and claims that only the deliberate rejection of known faith constitutes unbelief in a strict sense, while the "faultless" unbelief is a result of the sin of the ancestors (and as such is a punishment for this person). It does not suggest that the whole human being is created in the image of God.

Brown does not present any strong arguments in favor of the reinterpretation of Aquinas's theory of *imago Dei*. Moreover, Brown's revised version of this theory carries the following risks: (i) animals, i.e., beings devoid of intellect, can be falsely elevated to the level of beings created in the image of God; (ii) human beings become dangerously similar to animals, for their intellect is equalized with their body and lower faculties of the soul; (iii) the hierarchy of beings presented by Aquinas becomes obsolete (O'Neill, 2018, p. 25); (iv) the status of angels becomes problematic because the intellect is understood only as a part of a soul, not as separable intelligence.

Lastly, to state that the intellect is insufficient to constitute the image of God in Man and that it needs other parts of the human soul and the human body is to forsake the image of the Trinity; or to fall into the heresies of Arius or Sebellius (O'Neill, 2018, pp. 27–28).

Conclusion

To finish the article I would like to draw a few conclusions that stem from this analysis:

1. Man's intellect is created in the image of God, for it imitates God in the species of His Nature.
2. Human intellect imitates the internal life of the Trinity.
3. The human body and irrational animals resemble God in the likeness of a trace. Yet, the human body is different from animal bodies because it is inclined towards heaven.
4. Aquinas distinguishes three stages of realizing the *imago Dei* in human beings: (i) *imago creationis*; (ii) *imago recreationis*; (iii) *imago similitudinis*. They are reachable accordingly for: everyone, the faithful, and the blessed.
5. As a being created in the image of God, a human partakes in all transcendentals.
6. As a being created in the image of God a human is: (i) capable of knowing and loving God; (ii) responsible for their own actions as someone *sui iuris*; (iii) capable of freely choosing and deciding what goals they want to achieve and what kind of life they want to lead.
7. The final goal of a human being is eternal life in the community with God, not a good and prosperous existence on earth.
8. The internal life of the Trinity is analogously transferred into the domain of an individual who is capable of communicating with God, other people, and their community.
9. To claim that a whole human being is created in the image of God is to forsake the image of the Trinity in Man and the Thomistic hierarchy of beings.

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Author Note

Wojciech S. Kilan, MA, PhD candidate at the Institute of Philosophy, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wrocław. Member of the Naukowe Towarzystwo Tomistyczne (Academic Thomistic Society) and Pracownia Badań nad Światem Przeżywanym (UWr) (Research Centre for the Experienced World). His main academic interests are the history of philosophy, virtue ethics, philosophy of politics, anaclitic philosophy, and phenomenology. Under the supervision of Dr Michał Głowala, he is working on his doctoral thesis entitled *The Thomistic Ethics of Lethal Actions of the State*.

Address for correspondence: Institute of Philosophy, University of Wrocław, ul. Koszarowa 3, 51-149 Wrocław, Poland.

Citation

Kilan, W.S. (2023). *Imago Dei* in St. Thomas Aquinas: A Philosophical and Anthropological Analysis of Man Created in the Image of God. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, 62 (2), 65–82. DOI: 10.18276/aie.2023.62-03.